

THE MEASURE

A JOURNAL OF POETRY



Poems by Robert Frost, Padraic Colum, Raymond
Holden, George Brandon Saul, Harold Vinal,
Lucy Hale Sturges, Hazel Hall — — — —

Genevieve Taggard and Children's Anthologies Reviewed

\$2.50 by the Year — — — — — Single Copies 25c

Published Monthly at 449 West 22nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Number 30 — — — — — August, 1923

Entered as second-class matter February 28, 1921, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

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In a Disused Graveyard

THE living come with grassy tread
To read the gravestones on the hill;
The graveyard draws the living still,
But never any more the dead.

The verses in it say and say:
"The ones who living come today
To read the stones and go away
Tomorrow dead will come to stay."

So sure of death the marbles rhyme,
Yet can't help marking all the time
How no one dead will seem to come.
What is it men are shrinking from?

It would be easy to be clever
And tell the stones: Men hate to die
And have stopped dying now forever.
I think they would believe the lie.

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The Kitchen Chimney

BUILDER, in building the little house,
In every way you may please yourself;
But please please me in the kitchen chimney;
Don't build me a chimney upon a shelf.

However far you must go for bricks,
Whatever they cost a-piece or a pound,
Buy me enough for a full length chimney,
And build the chimney clear from the ground.

It's not that I'm greatly afraid of fire,
But I never heard of a house that throve
(And I know of one that didn't thrive)
Where the chimney started above the stove.

And I dread the ominous stain of tar
That there always is on the papered walls,
And the smell of fire drowned in rain
That there always is when the chimney's false.

A shelf's for a clock, or vase, or picture,
But I don't see why it should have to bear
A chimney that only served to remind me
Of castles I used to build in air.

Gathering Leaves

SPADES take up leaves
No better than spoons,
And bags full of leaves
Are light as balloons.

I make a great noise
Of rustling all day
Like rabbit and deer
Running away.

But the mountains I raise
Elude my embrace,
Flowing over my arms
And into my face.

I may load and unload
Again and again
Till I fill the whole shed
And what have I then?

Next to nothing for weight;
And since they grew duller
From contact with earth,
Next to nothing for color;

Next to nothing for use.
But a crop is a crop,
And who's to say where
The harvest shall stop?

—*Robert Frost*

First Voyage

SHIP, ship, go straight as an arrow out
Into clearness, straight as a mew flying south,
Wing like a mew in the sun, lift like a shout,
Lift like a quick word out of a lover's mouth.

Who knows what ports wait your spars and your rigging and sails,
What harbors and what lotus isles of nightingales,
What aqueous pools of spouting and marvelous whales?

Go like a bird, a bird, tired of the land,
Of trees in a lull of cool green and the peace
Of glens where twigs crackle. Dunes and the push of sand,
Breast deep in water go, breast deep to Greece.

Cut is the rope that held you, the yearning rope that bound you,
The wind, the terrible wind and the sea have found you,—
The forests that bore you, were not strong enough to hold you.

Go like a lover, ship, leap to the tide, the tide,—
Lie against its panting side. Ride, ship, ride!

What Women Say

ANNA SAID:

I CAN forgive the touch of your hands like silver on my eyes,
And the touch of your lips smoothing my supple wrist;
I can excuse the panting of your body
But not your words,—they should be thin, thin as mist.

HELEN SAID:

I can forgive your words for they are thick and heavy
As stones and they weigh me down with gold;
I can excuse your whispers, your whispers that give me sleep,—
But not your touch because it is too cold.

—*Harold Vinal*

Salomé

O YOU whom I have whispered the stars' young daughter
Drawn from the phantom lights of a perished spring,
To-night the moon on the crisply tangled water
Is like a drowned man's glittering hair . . . Sing!

There is no sword like the curve of your white proud instep
There where the blue lights freeze and the shadows shrink:
See, in my hands, like a cup, I bring you the darkly
Beautiful blood of the earth's young heart . . . Drink!

Freely I beg your desire and cry it is nothing
Weighed with the death of your breast and all may chance.
—O for the frost and flame of a thousand hatreds!
Woman and utter beast!—Dance!—*Dance!*

—*George Brandon Saul*

To All Dead Women

WHEN I remember ladies who have gone
Into the earth upon the piteous quest
Of happiness more lasting than the guest
That ever left them empty-armed at dawn,
I cannot then forbear to think upon
The many who have turned, with all confessed,
Unto the love of man, hoping for rest,—
To wither in its burning, every one.

I who have known strange hunger in my hour,
That now alone by my autumnal hearth
Watch the last ember flicker to its end,
Gasping beneath its ultimate yellow flower—
Oh, women sleeping in the quiet earth,
I think you would have liked me for a friend.

—*Lindley Williams Hubbell*

The Lost

THE bricks of trodden places and the stones
Which keep the many living safe from space
I could have used to make a dwelling place
Secure enough to satisfy my bones.
I could have heard soft curtains faintly flow
Inward upon the admitted air, and seated
In easy quietness, willingly defeated,
Believed that peace were all a man should know.
I could have heard in gladness the good words
Of friends, voices of children, and the fall
Of sweet, explicit footsteps in the hall
And a little song clear and cool as a bird's.
I could have thought that beauty was a dusk
Heaped up with fireflies chipped from comets' cheeks.
I could have disavowed the blood that seeks
For channels through the reason's threadbare husk.
But I have lain beyond my hour with grass
Cooled by slow rising from the flesh of the ground
And now with passionate madness am I wound
Who might have lived and suffered passion to pass.
Now never a little stone, however worn,
Nor any flower, however delicate,
But being of the earth has blade and weight
To cut and break my heart and leave me torn
Between the lost world and the lovelier,
The inapprehensible and never attained
Which only through one beauty held and strained
Against my body seems to take shape and stir.

—*Raymond Holden*

Kerry Nursing Song

LEN the Smith—he lives below
Loch Lené—
Len once made a Magic Tower
For a Maid with brow of brightness:
Ainé was she,
Daughter of the Lord of Ocean,
Mananaun!

And to this day stands the Tower
That Len for his leannean builded,
Still it stands
Though she went back to the Ocean,
Though he works below Loch Lene,
For Len mixed into the mortar
Hair of Ainé's head, the golden,
And the Tower will stand in Thomond
Till one fair as Ainé's passes.

Still in Thomond stands the Tower:
Still it stands though Blanaid passed it,
Though the grey-eyed girls of Thomond
Passed and pass it:

But the wise cranes that have builded
On the Tower, now are telling
That they've seen you in your cradle!

Look, my dear, the cranes are flying!

—*Padraic Colum*

Old Andrew

OLD Andrew sitting in his father's chair
By the cracked window, watches dark sift down
Over the great, impending mountain wall.
High on the ridge, the ragged pines stand clear
Against a pale sky brushed with saffron gold,
And then vast shadows trail their purple cloaks
Down through the gnarled, old orchard trees
Across the roadway, and the night enfolds
This haunted valley holding in its hills
The farmbound residue of migrant stock,
The less adventurous sons of pioneers.

Night in the quiet house lies thick as dust
Till Andrew's sister Ellen lifts the lamp
From its high shelf and strikes a smoky flare
That draws her shadow on the plaster wall,
Straight-lined and meagre. Clearer still
Than now she stands before him, Andrew sees
Her dancing in French Fours with young Joe Mead,
Before Joe's father left his stony farm
When, past denial, word came home to him
His son had set the fires on the hill.
Queer streak Joe always had; some even said—
But he'd been put away these thirty years,
And Ellen never took the Burned Barn road,
Nor ever looked at any man again.

The lamp flame steadies, fading out the past.
Old Andrew watches Ellen clear away
The half-uneaten supper, and he hears
Mice in the pantry gnaw a crumbling way
Behind the bread board, and the tall, old clock
Wheezing before it strikes the indifferent hour.
Across the starlit meadow, through the night,
Comes frosty clear the little crystal clash
Of swift brook water in a stony bed,

Singing of youth and immortality.
One great fear floods old Andrew's misty thought,—
That death has quite forgotten there is need
To set an end where men make no beginnings.

Up through the branches of the dooryard spruce
He looks to dead star fires on the ridge
As though he watched for some strange thing to pass.
"Slower than God's off ox," old Andrew sighs.

—*Helen Ives Gilchrist*

II Magnopoco

LIT by soft fire, softened by light he goes
Forever between chaos and repose;
But there are shadows drumming in his heart:
He loves the veins of beauty, scorns the art
That muffles with a haunting golden hood
The plunge of pistons roaring through our blood.
Always beginning where he had begun
He heaps his frantic towers to Babylon;
Fingers a phrase, derides it, weeps, and makes
Gestures that are as beautiful as snakes;
And then, and now, and always wearies of these,
Is drenched and scorched by alternate ecstasies;
And ends again and again with the same threat;
"Someday I shall get the sun, someday I shall get
That multitudinous disc: all flame will pass
Into a pin-point under a piece of glass!"

—*Joseph Auslander.*

Rain

I HAVE raised my hands to rain,
Raised my hands until my lifting
Fingers, like warm snow, seemed drifting
Into rain, becoming rain.

I have given all my hands.
Rain has taken them and made
Out of them a liquid shade
To lay upon a place of sands.

What stirred in my pulse now sighs
In the long sigh of the rain;
What was restlessness will rain
Against some woman's windowpane
And make a woman close her eyes.

What my fingers had of shape
Is a curve of blowing light,
Moving in unhurried flight,
With the rain, to its escape.

Yet what have I given rain,
Who have felt the edge of rain
Fray my fingers, who have striven
To give much, what have I given
But a little moving pain?

And what have I more, what boast
Of a meaning may I keep,
Who am weary as a sheep
And slightly pleased like a ghost?

—*Hazel Hall*

Struck

INEVITABLY
The clock chimes three

Pebbles of sound
In a listening pond

Rippling and dropping
Under and under—

While a child on the shore
Is lost in wonder.

—*Virginia Woods Mackall*

On the Bow of a Ship

ALL men are at our back . . .
Plunge, bow, into the coming swell.
Down, down, into the track;
We are a rolling bell.
Fall, keel, into the lurching crest;
There is an evil thing below . . .
Torn water is the best,
Heavy and beautiful to throw.

Taut ship, the wind is in my throat,
A bitter wind is swinging;
Climb clear, and take it stinging,
Let not a rope go slack.
We are a strong bell ringing
And vibrant is our note.

All men are at our back;
Down, down, into the track;
Torn water is the best.
Slice, keel, into the lurching crest;
There is an evil thing below!

—*George O'Neil*

Oh, Let the Summer Mould You

O H, let the summer mould you, let the press
Of slow, monotonous days, surging
Like warm sea water, beating on a shifting beach
Weld your divided thought, your scattered urging;

The poignant fires of spring can never reach
Beyond the steady glow of disregarded embers;
A leaping flame strikes high, but flickering
Sinks back to earth again, and who remembers?

The tireless reiteration of the sea, the ebbing mass
Of days that differ as the droning waves;
One but a little greener, one not quite so high,
And one that leaves a spray of sea-weed on the sand;

Conflux of days, which form a great relentless hand,
A gyrant crucible, above a fire deliberate and slow,
Fusing and changing us, refining our desire,
Transforming our torrential love into a crystal floe;

We strain against it as a swimmer strains against the sea,
It is without resistance, unaware, and still we cannot pass;
It has the calm resiliency of fields of withered grass,
Breast high; an endless acreage where we struggle soundlessly.

The sea takes bits of quartz and jagged stone
And brings them back again, as smooth as polished sandal-wood;
Autumn will find our passion, our uncharted mood,
As finely rounded and as scrupulously known.

—*Lucy Hale Sturges*

The Measure * A Journal of Poetry

Published monthly by the Editors at 449 West 22nd Street, New York

Edited by Kenneth Slade Alling, Joseph Auslander, Padraic Colum, Carolyn Hall, Louise Townsend Nicholl, George O'Neil, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard, Winifred Welles. From these nine an acting editor and an assistant are elected quarterly by the board. Associate Editors—Hervey Allen, Maxwell Anderson, and Frank Ernest Hill.

Subscription Manager—Frances C. L. Robbins.

ACTING EDITOR: LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL

Naturalism and Fantasy

For Eager Lovers, by Genevieve Taggard. Thomas Seltzer, New York.

IN Genevieve Taggard's *For Eager Lovers* there is a streak of naturalism that makes hers wholly different from the poetry of other women-poets of today. It is a naturalism that goes oddly enough with a fantasy that might have come out of a fairy-tale. There is "With Child" and there is "The Enamel Girl." The second poem has the fantasy—

You faded. I never knew
How to unfold as flowers do.

Or how to nourish anything
To make it grow. I wound a wing

With one caress, with one kiss
Break most fragile ecstasies.

Now terror touches me when I
Dream I am touching a butterfly.

I like this brittle-gleaming verse, but it is by the other strand that she holds that Genevieve Taggard becomes unlike the poets that she has been compared with—

Now I am slow and placid, fond of sun,
Like a sleek beast, or a worn one.

This is from "With Child," the poem that closes with the unforgettable lines—

In the dark,
Defiant even now, it tugs and moans
To be untangled from these mother's bones.

Many of the poems in *For Eager Lovers* have so much of direct desire, and so much of the fantasy that seems as if it belonged to a fairy-tale that a regret came to me while reading them—a regret that this poet was not possessed of a tradition and a convention—a tradition that she might relate her experience to and a convention that she might have expressed herself in terms of. The casual forms she has adopted do not give her expression the richness that the ballad or the folk-song forms would have given it. We can think of very little of what is written in America today as going in the forms of the old oral poetry, but we can think of a certain amount of this poetry going into them—it is because it is typical in its way; it has the mood of a young girl and the mood of a woman in it.

And yet there seems to be something tentative about *For Eager Lovers*; perhaps it is because there are different things brought together in it—not only the poems that belong to the woman and the girl but the verses that belong to the propagandist as well. Taking it all in all, the book gives the impression that Genevieve Taggard has not yet brought all her powers into focus. She has conceptions that are truly imaginative. "Ice Age" seems to be an early poem, but it has such passages as these—

Not to give in
Men will go on
Making vague love, kissing wan
Faces. Trying to make
Children with women,
Trying to wake
Hints of old hunger—bitterly break
Flesh that turns marble-hard—trying to take
Life in their arms for their brief comfort's sake.

* * * * *

In tightening silence, they will search for sound;
Beneath the smother of the sky
Find tangled iron, as the first men found
Iron and more than mortal sinew in the ground.

* * * * *

And out of iron's touch upon their palms
Will come a song.
And they will seize stone hammers, make a clang,
Sing as they never sang—
Wild, assaulting, strong;

(Clang, cold clang)
Stone on stone, with iron bits,
Clamped together, (clang, clang),
Iron twisted till it fits—
Notched and jammed and bolted fast—
Rearing heavily and slow
One monument against the snow;
A monument to last, a tomb to hold
Yellow pollen of all past
Against the cold.

This poem is remarkable for its fading spectacle, and for its dramatic presentation of human isolation.

—Padraic Colum

Anthologies for Boys and Girls

Rainbow Gold, compiled by Sara Teasdale with illustrations by Dugald Walker. The Macmillan Company, New York.

The Girl's Book of Verse, compiled by Mary Gould Davis. Frederick A. Stokes Company, New York.

WHEN I was a school child there was one collection of poems which children carried about, *Poems Every Child Should Know*, and that only when "Young Lochinvar" or "O Captain, My Captain" was being memorized for recitation at morning exercises. The obligation in the title was enough to keep children from considering the book in any other light. In Dorothy Canfield's introduction to Mary Davis' book she quotes an apt axiom which reveals the change of heart and mind which has come over those who work for children, "Don't open doors for the children, give them the keys."

In the last generation the child reader has become an individual whose tastes are recognized and respected. The day of "writing down" to children has passed and it is only writers of very special talent like Hugh Lofting, Padraic Colum, Walter de la Mare, whose books really "sell themselves" to that honest and precise audience. Probably the greatest influence in bringing this about has been the splendid progress made in this time in the children's rooms of the public libraries. These two collections are a proof of this influence. Mary Davis is herself a children's librarian and in Sara Teasdale's prefatory note she speaks with particular appreciation of the assistance of Miss Annie Carroll Moore, for some years Supervisor of Work for Children in the New York Public Library, with whom Miss Davis has been associated.

Rainbow Gold is about as good a short collection of poems for boys and girls as anyone could get together. The book has a lilt and a lyric appeal that is characteristic of Sara Teasdale. Dugald Walker's illustrations add much, and the shape of the book is that nice broad shape which I, as one of the editors of *THE MEASURE*, prefer to all others. A certain grown person who read the collection enthusiastically insists that it is a "Blakey" book, not so much on account of William Blake's poems, since there are only two included, but because Mr. Walker's illustrations and the book as a whole sound a "Blakey" note, in some way a most appropriate note on which to pitch a children's anthology.

In her preface Sara Teasdale explains her idea of what in poetry appeals to children and her collection follows this idea. Reading through the book one finds plenty of romance and wonder and magic and fancy leading into "a land of clear colors and stories." There is nearly always a marked rhythm. Happiness is there throughout although some poems are sad, for I think children like sad things simply because they suggest happiness through strong contrast.

"Kubla Khan" opens the book and there follows a mixture of old and new, including among the new writers Robert Frost, Padraic Colum, Fanny Stearns Gifford, Walter de la Mare, Vachel Lindsay, John Masefield, Hilda Conkling, Anna Hempstead Branch. The last poem is James Ferguson's charming "Auld Daddy Darkness" and, while there is no point in quoting from an anthology of previously published verse, I can not resist repeating the last stanza which closes the book like a child's day:

Steek yer een, my wee tot, ye'll see Daddy then;
He's in below the bed claes, to cuddle ye he's fain;
Noo nestle to his bosie, sleep and dream yer fill,
Till Wee Davie Daylight comes keekin' owre the hill.

Mary Davis's book is less fascinating in appearance, having no illustrations and lacking any charm in typography or format, but it is a sound and well chosen collection for girls. It is divided into four parts, "Melody," "The Pipes of Pan," "Enchantment," and "Stories." To my mind there is a question whether it would not have been better to have erased these divisions from the final ms. of the book, letting their effect remain but removing the labels. The first division is an especially well selected group showing keen insight into girls' tastes, when girls begin to step out of childhood. Two girls I know had a way of thinking of the fine-spun grey days of

summer rain. These days they called "drurilain," a word which to them caught all the magic and invitation and mystery of those days. The first section of *The Girl's Book of Verse* has much suggestion of "drurilain" in it.

Miss Davis, a story teller herself, is led to include more long narratives than another compiler might, even to the whole of Browning's "Saul," but the door of narrative poetry opens into a kingdom which warrants a key somewhat larger than ordinary.

—Carolyn Hall.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Blindman Prize of \$250 offered annually through The Poetry Society of South Carolina has been awarded by John Erskine, of Columbia University, acting as sole judge, to Leonora Speyer for her poem "Oberammergau," with honorable mention to Richard Butler Glaenzer for his poem "Leaves of a Sapling."

This prize was awarded last year to Mrs. Grace Hazard Conkling, for her poem "Variations on a Theme," Miss Amy Lowell acting as sole judge.

The Blindman Prize, which is open to any American citizen or British subject speaking English as his native language, will again be offered for the year 1923-24, through The Poetry Society of South Carolina.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 1923.

The Editor, *The Measure*, New York City.

Sir:

In his paraphrase of the introduction to "Contemporary German Poetry" printed in the June issue of *The Measure* as a review of that volume, Mr. Joseph Auslander writes:

"A sick hyper-sensitive spirit, whose fragile nerves, as Ermatinger says of Trakl, are torn by the world 'as a spider-web is torn by stone,' revenges himself upon the world by destroying its coherence and undoing its materiality." On page xxiii of the Introduction to the volume the following sentence occurs: "A sick, super-sensitive spirit, whose frail nerves, as Ermatinger says of Trakl, are torn by the world 'as a spider-web is torn by a stone,' he revenges himself upon the world by destroying its coherence and undoing its materiality." I leave the qualification of Mr. Auslander's performance to you.

Very truly,

Babette Deutsch.

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE EDITORS

at

449 West 22nd Street, New York City

Subscription \$2.50 a year

Single copies 25 cents

WHERE THE MEASURE IS ON SALE

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